



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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FOOD STAMP PARTICIPATION CLIMBS IN TENNESSEE *MORE THAN 350,000 FAMILIES ISSUED BENEFITS LAST MONTH*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — More than 350,000 Tennessee families received needed help putting food on the table in April through the Food Stamp program. The number of households seeking assistance rose 13 percent from April 2003 to April 2004. The current number of individuals in those households totals more than 800,000.

Food Stamp Program benefits are 100 percent federally funded through the United States Department of Agriculture. The program is administered by Human Services and provides nutritional assistance benefits to children and families, the elderly, the disabled, unemployed and working families.

The rise in Food Stamp Program participation can be attributed to seasonal factors and continued weak job growth. Outreach and education efforts on the part of the Department of Human Services and its partners have made many potentially eligible people aware of the program, as well.

Davidson County saw an increase in Food Stamp participation by 17 percent from April 2003 to April 2004 (29,000 to 34,000 households). Rutherford County numbers jumped 15 percent (5,600 to 6,400 households), followed by Knox County, which had a 14 percent increase (15,700 to 17,900 households). Shelby County has the highest number of Food Stamp participants in the state and saw an increase in participation by 12 percent over the last year (60,000 to 67,100 households).

More than \$60 million in Food Stamp benefits are issued in Tennessee each month. Last month \$67.3 million in Food Stamp benefits were issued, compared with \$60.3 million in April 2003. For the last state fiscal year, the average household size was 2.3 persons, and the average household monthly benefit was \$172.

For more information on the Food Stamp program and to view a county by county breakdown of Food Stamp participation and issuance, visit the Department of Human Services website at:

<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/fs-participation.htm>

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